home page showing variables such as alarms, number of users logged in, etc., and to perform functions such as releasing an access block on a subscriber mailbox.

The present invention has been described with respect to handling text messages such as e-mail and facsimile. The text messages could have other formats such as a word processing format, a spread sheet format, a database format, etc. and could be other MIME type information that can be retrieved without conversion. The applications that are performed by the application processing units could include personal information managers, appointments, address books, etc.

The many features and advantages of the invention are apparent from the detailed specification and, thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the invention which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation illustrated and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A message storage system, comprising:

a single multimedia mailbox for each subscriber storing voice messages and text messages intermingled;

a voice interface providing access to the messages via a telephone; and

a network interface providing access to the messages over a network via a personal computer with message identifiers of the messages including a session number and a randomly assigned identifier and the message identifiers assigned to a file name sent to a browser.

2. A message storage and retrieval system, comprising:

a telephone;

a telephone network coupled to said telephone;

a computer including a digital network browser;

a digital network coupled to the computer; and

a distributed architecture message system coupled to said telephone network and said digital network, said message system comprising:

a digital switch coupled to said telephone network;

a control unit storing addresses of multimedia messages of a single mailbox for each subscriber including voice, text, and video messages, and controlling switching of said digital switch;

a processing unit coupled to said digital switch, storing and retrieving the multimedia messages, and outputting the voice and text messages to said telephone as audio over said telephone network responsive to telephone commands;

a local network coupled to said control unit and said processing unit; and

a network unit coupled to the digital network and said local network including a data conversion cache, providing a home page with a message list including message identifiers comprising a session number and a randomly assigned file identifier responsive to a home page request by the browser, retrieving the messages from the processing unit and streaming the messages to the computer responsive to browser message play requests to the home page having an expired expiration date, the computer playing an audio of the voice messages in real-time as the voice messages are received, displaying an image of the text messages in real-time as the video messages are received, and displaying images of video messages in real-time as the video messages are received, and said computer recording a message and forwarding a message to said network unit for storage in said processing unit.

* * * * *